



# **Riots, rowdies and rock'n'roll: The reception of American popular culture in West Germany between 1956-1959**

*Henrik John Hohl*

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Studienarbeit aus dem Jahr 2004 im Fachbereich Amerikanistik - Kultur und Landeskunde, Note: 1,0, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, 14 Quellen im Literaturverzeichnis, Sprache: Deutsch, Abstract: Happy birthday rock'n'roll! Since there seems to be a general agreement that April 12th 1954, when Bill Haley and the Comets recorded their famous "Rock around the clock" in Manhattan, New York, marks the beginning of the rock'n'roll revolution, admirers from all over the world have launched a reminiscent "party" with revival concerts of rock'n'roll icons, giving an extensive account of how they have seen the 1950s and the rise of a new music era. In a non-representative survey, initiated by the German e-mail-provider GMX, seven percent of 22420 voters think of Bill Haley, and 27 percent of Elvis Presley as their personal rock-legend.<sup>1</sup> The Beatles, the Rolling Stones, Jimi Hendrix and Bob Dylan were also among the highest rankings. So one third of the vote after gave their vote to rock'n'roll legends who have decisively coined the beginnings of this new music sweep.

A unified view on how the rise of rock'n'roll had come about stays an illusion though. German rock idol Peter Kraus stated in an interview with German national television station ZDF in cooperation with the German press agency dpa on April 7th 2004:

Die Vorstellung, dass sich plötzlich die ganze Jugend jubelnd in Lederjacken geworfen hat, ist völlig falsch. [...] Die Leute haben gedacht, so etwas kann es nur in Amerika geben, denn die Amis würden ja sowieso spinnen. [...] In Amerika ging es wild zu, hier in Deutschland spielte sich eher die brave Abteilung dieser Bewegung ab.

A far more rebellious account is given by German rock legend Udo Lindenberg who sees the changes of time in a different way:

[...] es gab sehr viele Schlager und der Himmel hing voller Mandolinen, und es schnulzte also nur so vor sich hin, bis dann plötzlich granatenmäßig also der Rock'n'roll da irgendwie einschlug und da irgendwie so ein Erdbeben verursachte und so 'ne gesunde Unruhe ins Land brachte.

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